

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 SCCT-01 SY-04 OMB-01 /065 W

----- 092822

R 081445Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6182

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 0373

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, IN

SUBJECT: STILL NO CLEAR PROGRESS IN UNCOVERING KILLERS
OF L. N. MISHRA

REF: NEW DELHI 0089

1. ALTHOUGH SEVERAL PERSONS WERE HELD FOR QUESTIONING AFTER THE BOMB BLAST JANUARY 2 WHICH KILLED RAILWAY MINISTER L. N. MISHRA (AND ONE OTHER WHO DIED SEVERAL DAYS LATER), THE GOI HAS THUS FAR NOT UNCOVERED THE KILLER OR KILLERS. IN A MEMORIAL CEREMONY FOR MISHRA IN DELHI JANUARY 8, PRIME MINISTER GANDHI TOOK THE LINE, HOWEVER, THAT RATHER THAN BEING "ACCIDENTAL" (PRESUMABLY THIS MEANS THE ACT OF ONE INDIVIDUAL, THE MURDER WAS "WELL PLANNED", AND THAT SHE WAS THE ULTIMATE TARGET OF SHUCH ATTACKS. TAKING ANGRY NOTE OF A RUMOR IN WIDE CIRCULATION IN DYHHI AND ELSEWHERE THAT INDIVIDUALS IN THE CONGRESS PARTY OF THE GOVERNMENT WERE BEHIND THE BOMB BLAST AND THAT MISHRA'S DEATH ELIMINATED A GREAT SOURCE OF EMBARRASSMENT TO THE PRIME MINISTER, MRS. GANDMS SAID
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THAT "WHEN I AM KILLED, THEY WILL SAY I DID IT*"

2. CONGEN BOMBAY HAS REPORTED A CONVERSATION WITH INDEPENDENT GUJARAT MP PROFESSOR MAVLANKAR, NORMALLY A VERY BALANCED AND CAREFUL MAN, WHO ARTICULATED THE RUMOR MRS. GANDHI REFERRED TO VERY SPECIFICALLY AND SAID HE THOUGH IT WAS A "STRONG POSSIBILITY". THE STORY HAS ALSO BEEN HEARD BY EMBASSY OKYICERS FROM MANY SOURCES IN NEW DELHI. NO ONE OFFERS ANY EVIDENCE OR ARGUMENTS WHATSOEVER TO SUPPORT THE HYPOTHESIS OTHER THAN THE RELIEF MISHRA'S DEATH BRINGS THE PRIME MINISTER FROM FURTHER CONTAMINATION BY MISHRA'S CORRUPT POLITICAL PRACTICES ON HER BEHALF.

3. OPPOSITION CALLS FOR A JUDICIAL COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE THE KILLING HAVE NOT BEEN PICKED UP BY THE GOVERNMENT, BUT THERE IS A RAILWAY BOARD INVESTIGATION BEING LAUNCHED INTO THE MEDICAL CARE TENDERED MISHRA AFTER THE EXPLOSION. A PATNA DOCTOR WHO EVENTUALLY TREATED MISHRA HAS PUBLICLY CHARGED THAT MISHRA WAS ALLOQD TO REMAIN WITHOUT PROPER CARE FOR HOURS AFTER THE EXPLOSION ON BOARD THE TRAIN CARRYING HIM TO PATNA AND THAT THE TRAIN EVENTUALLY PULLED INTO THE WRONG SIDING, FURTHER DELYING TREATMENT. KXCOMMENT: WHILE THIS IS MADE TO SOUND LIKE A "CONSPIRACY" BY SOME OF THE PRESS, IT SOUNDS TO US VERY MUCH LIKE LIFE IN OLD BIHAR.)

4. SOME CORRESPONDENTS (E.G., NEWSWEEK) BELIEVE THE ANANDA MARG MAY HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE SINCE THE TOWN WHERE MISHRA DIES, SAMASTIPUR, IS A CENTER OF ANANDA MARG ACTIVITY. OTHER REPORTS IN THE INDIAN PRESS, HOWEVER, HAVE SPECIFICALLY DENIED THE ANANDA MARG IS UNDER SUSPICION. MADAM GANDHI'S SPEECH REFERRED TO ABOVE MADE NO ATTEMPT TO FOCUS ON ANY SPECIFIC SUSPECTS OTHER THAN THE "OPPOSITION". (SEE SEPTTEL FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS OF MRS. GANDHI'S SPEECH.) IN SHORT, THE KILLERS THUS FAR HAVE COVERED THEIR TRACKS.

5. COMMENT: OTHER THAN THE POLITICAL USE TO WHICH MISHRA'S DEATH MAY BE PUT DZ INDIAN POLITICIANS, OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT IT WILL NOT HAVE ANY MAJOR IMPACT ON GOI ACTIVITIES. THE CONGRESS PARTY (I.E., MRS. GANDHI) WILL HAVE TO FPFD ANOTHER
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FUND COLLECTOR; CONGRESS POLITICS IN BIHAR WILL BE THROWN INTO EVEN FURTHER CONFUSION; A NEW (AND PRESUMABLY MORE EFFICIWJ ENT) RAILWAYS MINISTER WILL BE CHOSEN; AND THE LICENSING SCANDAL WHICH HAS SWIRLED ABOUT MISHRA'S HEAD FOR THE LAST TWO SESSIONS OF PARLIAMENT WILL PROBABLY DIE OFF AS THE ONLY MAD WHO PRESUMABLY HAD THE "ANSWERS" IS NO LONGER ON THE SCENE.
SCHNEIDER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ASSASSINATION, DEATHS, TERRORISTS, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: RowellE0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975NEWDE00373
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750007-1032
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750169/aaaaciwp.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 NEW DELHI 0089
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: RowellE0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 AUG 2003 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <21 NOV 2003 by RowellE0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STILL NO CLEAR PROGRESS IN UNCOVERING KILLERS OF L. N. MISHRA
TAGS: PINS, IN, (MISHRA, L N)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006